DP/1997/CRP.19
7 May 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ANNUAL SESSION 1997
12-23 May 1997, New York
Item 14 of the provisional agenda
UNDP

OTHER MATTERS

UNDP and 20/20

1. Paragraph 88 (c) of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) states that 20/20 agreements must rest on a mutual commitment between interested developed and developing country partners to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) and 20 per cent of the national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes. The strength of the 20/20 concept is in its reciprocity principle. While precise interpretation of this requirement has differed among donors, there is clear agreement that accounting for basic social service (BSS) expenditures must be undertaken by both committed parties. Moreover, it was foreseen in the preamble to paragraph 88 that the implementation of WSSD "will need additional financial resources and more effective development cooperation and assistance in future". The 20/20 initiative is thus one of several instruments to bring resources effectively to bear on facilitating access to and improving the quality of a fundamental continuum of social services needed by all.

2. The United Nations system position on the 20/20 initiative was outlined in the multi-agency background paper provided for the Oslo Conference on 20/20 in April 1996.[1] Some United Nations specialized agencies (e.g., the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO)) have specific mandates and responsibilities in BSS. The UNDP approach to the 20/20 initiative facilitates inter-agency efforts at the country level and is often intersectoral within the context of national anti-poverty strategies. UNDP is also committed to helping interested countries to make the essential linkages, at both the policy and operational levels, between their programme elements in BSS and other key aspects of sustainable human development (SHD), such as employment/livelihoods and natural resource management.

3. While elements of the 20/20 idea were proposed earlier (e.g., 20 per cent of donor funding to be earmarked for social sector spending was noted in the Human Development Report 1991) UNDP first introduced the 20/20 principle explicitly into its Human Development Report series in 1994 and has since been strongly supportive of the concept. The 20/20 initiative as a national priority has emerged in some advisory notes, and in some cases, specific 20/20 initiatives are being supported at the country level by UNDP.

4. In December 1996, the Government of Norway provided extrabudgetary resources to the UNDP Poverty Strategies Initiative for assistance in country implementation of new 20/20 arrangements. Discussions are now being held between UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA to identify countries (building on UNICEF earlier work) in which social sector expenditure profiles are available, or where national studies can be conducted on budget and aid allocations to BSS. These studies will examine current allocations to BSS and the possible scope for restructuring budgets and aid allocations to BSS (both intra-sectorally and intersectorally) and for improving the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of basic social-service provisioning. UNDP has contacted a number of countries seeking interest in their possible involvement in such studies. So far, two countries, Burkina Faso and Cambodia, have been funded through this programme, and work is now under way at the country level on BSS expenditure reviews. Other countries are independently reviewing their BSS sector allocations using core programming resources. Also under discussion are regional seminars (tentatively in East Asia and Central America) to bring together representatives (a) from countries who have conducted these reviews and are willing to share their experiences and (b) from countries contemplating such reviews that are interested in learning from others on how the process worked.

5. In addition, and consistent with its organizing role under paragraph 99 of the WSSD Programme of Action, UNDP is advocating the 20/20 principle as a subject for discussion in round-table and Consultative Group meetings. It has been proposed that half a day be set aside at such meetings to review BSS issues/allocations, with 20/20 as a possible mechanism for support. For example, as recently initiated in Tokyo, both the Government of India and the World Bank have suggested that a half day be devoted to these discussions in the case of India, which can perhaps serve as a model.

6. A second aspect of the UNDP commitment to the 20/20 initiative is in the internal distribution of its own resources to BSS. Allocations within country programmes are determined essentially by the countries themselves. Furthermore, in contrast with other United Nations system institutions, the overall programme share to BSS for country, regional and global programmes covers all of the BSS sectors, often intersectorally. For example, the UNDP sponsorship of the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990, has led to extensive programme involvement in follow-up activities in basic education, often explicitly linked to governance and human resource management issues through capacity-building in education systems. UNDP joint work in the water sector with other agencies, including the World Bank, is also extensive and often linked to natural resource management/governance issues. Capacity development for improved service delivery downstream and the upstream management policy implications for BSS are thus of particular importance for UNDP.

7. Finally, the overall share of UNDP core and extrabudgetary funds to BSS is currently being determined, in the short term, through retroactive analysis. There are some well-known, major constraints to the accurate accounting of resource allocations to basic social sectors, not the least of which is that the 20/20 definition is inadequately reflected in the revised classification system of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which is currently used for reporting expenditures for UNDP programmes.

8. Over the longer term, the UNDP classification of programme data is being improved to accommodate all of the 20/20 elements as separate categories. This will permit timely reporting on 20/20 resource allocations by programme area, and by country/region, with aggregation possible also to global levels. This new data classification system is currently under design/field test and will not be operational in time to yield useful results for the next follow-up meeting to be held in Oslo in 1998; nevertheless, it promises much more accurate information on 20/20 over the next biennium. The new country office Financial Information Management System (FIMS) will specifically include markers to identify 20/20 activities. FIMS, which already has a detailed classification scheme to support UNDP areas of focus, will add these new elements in the next release, scheduled for later in 1997.

Notes

· Implementing the 20/20 initiative: Issues regarding definitions, modalities, and monitoring. Paper prepared by UNCTAD, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF and others for the Oslo Conference on 20/20, 23-25 April 1996.